

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

Hendrickson Trailer Suspension

Tennessee Manufacturing Extension Partnership

Lean Training and Ergonomics Assessment Proves Profitable for Hendrickson Trailer Suspension

Client Profile:

Hendrickson Trailer Suspension Systems is a leading supplier of truck, tractor, bus and recreational vehicle suspensions and springs, trailer suspensions, and truck and trailer lift axles. The company employs 50 people at its facility in Clarksville, Tennessee.

Situation:

Hendrickson was interested in addressing ergonomic issues in their facility. They also wanted to create more awareness of their Lean journey among newer, less experienced employees. The company contacted the Tennessee Manufacturing Extension Partnership (TMEP), a NIST MEP network affiliate, for help.

Solution:

TMEP brought in ergonomic specialist, Dr. Deivanayagam from Tennessee Technological University, who spent time with Hendrickson personnel analyzing potential lifting and movement issues in the manufacturing facility and offering solutions. Dr. Deivanayagam provided a walk through analysis of the manufacturing facility, watching the workers movements at the different work stations. He offered his knowledge of which movements were of particular ergonomic concerns and possible solutions to the issues. He took pictures during his visit and referenced those jobs in his report to the company which included different suggestions for improved methods as well as better more permanent and expensive solutions to correct potential ergonomic issues for the employees in the future. An example of one of the items that was implemented by Hendrickson Trailer was the purchase and installation of a new spindle lift assist device on the axle line. The employees were lifting a 20 or more pound spindle many times a day and now with the help of the lifting device the lifting and moving motion is accomplished with just using the fingertips. "We were extremely fortunate to have someone of Dr. Deivanayagam's caliber to do a walkthrough of our facility," said Marlin Smith, Hendrickson's Human Resources Manager. "Many of us have been through training, or benchmarked other facilities, but we could not have paid for the level of expertise that he provided to us. This partnership was priceless." TMEP also brought in Lean consultants from the University of Tennessee who provided a Lean overview class for company employees. Process improvements made from working on the Lean initiative helped Hendrickson Trailer retain sales of \$3 million and create capacity for increased sales of \$2 million.

Results:

- * Increased sales by \$2 million.
- * Retained sales of \$3 million.

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- * Realized \$10,000 in cost savings.
- * Invested \$575,000 in plant and equipment.
- * Invested \$6,996 in workforce development.

Testimonial:

"The well-presented, well-constructed Lean training gave our team members a deeper understanding of Lean concepts. We saw almost immediate improvement in some of the projects that had stalled in months prior. This was the shot in the arm we needed."

Marlin Smith, Human Resources Manager